

COMMENCEMENT CONCERT

with

The University Symphony Orchestra,

Soloists, and Combined Choirs

Dwight Gustafson, Conductor

Festival Overture .... *Dmitri Shostakovich*
(1906-1975)

Dmitri Shostakovich is one of the most respected and representative composers of post-Revolutionary Russia. Indeed, for a composer to be respected in the USSR, he must also be representative of the government's wishes. Twice Shostakovich survived serious criticisms for being too "formalistic." In response to one of these reprimands, Shostakovich promised, "I have always thought of the People, of my listeners, of those who reared me; and I always strive that the People should accept my music." In accordance with his duties, he composed the *Festival Overture* in 1954 for a special celebration. It appropriately illustrates Shostakovich's desire for popular and good-humored appeal, his skill in handling the orchestra, and his Soviet heritage. Perhaps Tolstoi's tribute to Shostakovich best summarizes his style: "He rested his ear against the heart of his country and heard its mighty song."

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor .... *Sergei Rachmaninov*
(1873-1943)

Moderato
Adagio sostenuto
Allegro scherzando

Matthew Edwards, soloist

In 1897 a promising young Russian composer hid on a staircase while his first symphony was being premiered by an inept orchestra and a probably inebriated conductor. The Russian critic-composer César Cui wrote of the fiasco in a newspaper review, saying that such music would have "delighted all the denizens of hell." The words of this review haunted, undermined, and destroyed the confidence of the 24-year-old composer to the extent that he went into what today would be called a clinical depression. He no longer would or could compose. Friends and family, in their desperate efforts to save him and his talent, appealed to Dr. Dahl, a psychologist, for help. A gifted amateur musician, Dr. Dahl employed auto-suggestion and hypnosis. In his *Memoirs*, Rachmaninov wrote, "I heard the same hypnotic formula repeated day after day . . . 'You will begin to write your concerto . . . You will work with great facility . . . The concerto will be of excellent

quality.' Although it may sound incredible, this cure really helped me . . . . Out of my gratitude I dedicated my second concerto to him."

The full premiere of the Second Concerto was held in Moscow on October 27, 1901, to resounding enthusiasm which has never really ceased. It remains one of the most popular piano concertos in the repertory today.

Although melancholy does seem to pervade much of the concerto, it is alleviated by brilliant keyboard displays, lush lyricism, and colorful instrumentation.

The opening eight chords of the first movement are perhaps as memorable, dramatic, and arresting as the introduction to any concerto. The intense passion of the first theme (initially presented in the strings) contrasts with the warm lyricism of the broad second theme (introduced by the piano).

The second movement is a cantabile nocturne of three sections. The first section introduces its thematic material in the flute and clarinet, accompanied by triplet arpeggios in the piano. The faster middle section climaxes in a cadenza before returning to the original theme.

The energetic finale contrasts two moods: the first is a march which includes a quasi-glissando entrance by the piano with many further pyrotechnics in the solo part; the second is the rapturous melody first heard in the viola and oboe, which has become one of the most recognizable in all of concerto literature. The ending of the concerto combines both themes in a brilliant tour-de-force, once described as a veritable "orgy of virtuoso pianism."

INTERMISSION*

Suite from THE PRINTING .... *Dwight Gustafson*
(b. 1930)

Title Music
Confrontation
Baptism
To the Printing House
The Chase
Finale

From his film music for *The Printing*, Dwight Gustafson has compiled a suite of six pieces. Produced by Bob Jones University's Unusual Films Department, *The Printing* takes place in pre-glasnost Russia and portrays the determination of believers "to obey God rather than man," regardless of the personal sacrifice. Concerning the music, Dr. Gustafson writes, "There are two principal melodic themes in the film. The first is an original melody conceived to sound typically Russian. The second melody is a beautiful Russian hymn, taken directly from one of the Russian believers' hymnbooks...." The Title Music unfolds the original theme in a slow, insistent march that grows in volume and intensity and then gradually dies away. "Confrontation" includes both themes as well as a trombone leitmotif which represents the KGB throughout the film score. The confrontation occurs between the KGB and believers in an outdoor service. The next movement, "Baptism," provides a transition from Aleksandr's refusal to baptize his son Dmitri to the scene of Dmitri's baptism at a lake. Dr. Gustafson acknowledges, "It is here that Tim Rogers, the film's director, deliberately gave me time to develop a full-scale piece of music that utilizes the Russian hymn in choral prelude style against an undulating string and wind accompaniment. The hymn reaches its climax as Dmitri emerges from the water." In "To the Printing House" the music reflects the attraction of Dmitri and Galina for each other as they "walk through a beautiful winter snowscape." The original Russian theme is transformed into broad, warm, lyrical lines. "The Chase" again transforms this same theme, but this time into an exciting, energetic, and martial mood which appropriately pictures the KGB's pursuit of Dmitri's truck. Dr. Gustafson summarizes the "Finale" as representing "the ultimate triumph of the believer's faith and the Word of God." The old Russian hymn is utilized in this movement in a majestic setting for brass while the strings and winds insistently remind us of brief motives from the score's main theme.

Stabat Mater .... *Giuseppe Verdi*
(1813-1901)

In his twilight years, the great opera composer Verdi turned to four sacred texts for inspiration in his last works. Although these four sacred pieces were not composed as a set, they were performed and published as such from their completion. Like the other three in the set, the Stabat Mater was not designed for liturgical performance but was intended merely as a "religiously inspired dramatic picture." Verdi, in fact, had rejected the church early in life, but according to his friend and librettist,

Boito, Verdi felt that "faith was the sustenance of the heart." In one of his letters, he revealed his philosophy of church music: "I am one of those who think that religious music should have a character and a style of its own. . . . If music has made so much progress from the Gregorian time till now, . . . why should we deprive ourselves of all this [progress]?" That progress, utilizing all the resources of full chorus and orchestra, contributes to making the Stabat Mater one of Verdi's most dramatic, popular, and moving works.

The text for the Stabat Mater is a Latin medieval poem which describes Mary's suffering as she watches her Son on the cross. One of its interior verses pleads, "Let me weep beside thee, mourning the Crucified as long as I shall live."

Program notes by Karen Wilson

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

The University Symphony Orchestra has had a busy year—the recording of the music score for *The Printing* in August and September; a gala concert of Russian music with world-famous basso Jerome Hines and the combined University choirs in November; two opera productions, Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in December and March; and now this concert at the year's finale. The majority of the orchestra members are students, assisted by music faculty. The orchestra's 1991-92 season will begin with an October concert featuring internationally acclaimed tenor Robert White, followed by a week of sacred concerts in churches from Richmond to Philadelphia in late October and Handel's *Messiah* in November.

Matt Edwards is a senior piano performance major from Greenville. He will begin graduate studies at BJU in the fall as a graduate assistant in the Piano Department. He made his debut at age 11 with the Carolina Youth Symphony. Among the many competitions he has won are Concerto Competitions of the Carolina Youth Symphony, the American Association of Christian Schools in 1985, the Stravinsky Awards International Piano Competition at the University of Illinois in 1987, the Greenville Symphony Mozart Festival Competition in 1987, the Young Artists Concerto Competition of the South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra in 1990, and The Wurlitzer Collegiate Artist Competition of the Music Teachers National Association in 1990.

The four University choirs heard tonight—three Vespers Choirs and the University Chorale—are directed by Warren Cook, Ned Davis, Gail Gingery, and William McCauley. They combine twice yearly for performances with orchestra of major oratorios and other choral-orchestral works. In November they will perform Handel's *Messiah* and, at this time next year, will combine with orchestra and soloists for a gala patriotic program.

FOUNDER'S MEMORIAL AMPHITORIUM
May 3, 1991
8:00 p.m.

*Chimes will sound and lobby lights will flash three minutes before the end of intermission. After the houselights are dimmed following intermission, no one will be readmitted to his seat.

Cameras and recording equipment are not permitted in the Amphitorium during any performance.